

MARY WYATT

Vengeance

Just as the sun rose, I saw him silhouetted against the early light, gently swinging from the tree. **My** tree at **my** place of solace! Refuge from a shitty life “gone to hell in a hand basket,” as my Gran would have said. “We all have choices you know Leanne. Make yours wisely”. Gran believed in the value of an honest, simple life.

She took me in when my hippy parents ran off to South America to “find themselves,” doing her best to console an angry, rebellious teenager.

My choice was an armed robber, Nathan, an ex con, who came to work on Gran’s farm as part of his parole. She believed in second chances but this one came at a huge cost.

A land developer pressured Gran to sell her beachfront farmland and when she resisted, he encouraged the local council with a substantial donation to revalue the land. The hike in mortgage payments drove Gran to the wall. Overnight it seemed, she aged, bitter and defeated. Bankrupt, we lived in the caravan park beside our old farm. Gran watched with a jaundiced eye, the building of apartments on her land. The poison seeped in and I nurtured a powerful hatred of the bank manager and developer. They had brought us to ruination and somehow, I would make them pay.

And I did! His was the first bank we robbed. With a gun to his head the manager did a line of cocaine, which Nathan posted to the bank’s Facebook page. In a dodgy pub we traded coke for gelignite and blew up the nearly completed beachfront apartments. We went on the run then, stealing, selling drugs until finally the money ran out and one morning Nathan was gone.

I went back home. Gran had died by then – of a broken heart no doubt. I dyed my hair, wore glasses, put on weight, added a prosthetic mouthpiece to change my speech and appearance and thought I was safe. I rented a van near the beach and every morning would take my coffee down to the little cove and sit under that tree.

As I got nearer, I could see the body clearly – it was Nathan – and pinned to his chest was a message:

“You’re Next!”

I finished my coffee, shed my clothes and walked into the sea. I’d heard drowning was peaceful...perhaps I’ll find out.